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ICAA

presents

Pichet Klunchun and myself (2005)

Conception : Jérôme Bel
By and with Pichet Klunchun and Jérôme Bel

20 & 21 October 2006

With support from


NATIONAL ARTS COUNCIL
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THEATREWORKS

Coproduction : Bangkok Fringe Festival, SACD / Festival Montpellier Danse 2005,

R.B. Jérôme Bel (Paris)

A commission by Tang Fu Kuen for the *Bangkok Fringe Festival*

With the help of AFPA (Association française d'action artistique), Alliance

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Manager: Sandro Grando

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In September 2004, I was invited to Bangkok by Singaporean curator Tang Fu-Kuen to lead a project. I wondered for a while if I had to accept the invitation and I finally proposed to try to work with a traditional Thai dancer.

I am indeed deeply interested in the extra-occidental performing arts traditions since the bedazzlement I experienced when I attended a Kabuki performance in Tokyo in 1989. I had similar feelings with Indian traditional dance or with the parade of the Rio de Janeiro Carnival.

Tang Fu Kuen proposed dancer and choreographer Pichet Klunchun to encounter with me in December of the same year. We met without knowing anything about what could finally result from our meeting. I had just prepared before some questions to ask this dancer. Personally, I had only a vague idea of what was traditional Thai dance. Pichet Klunchun didn't know my work.

The circumstances of our meeting determined the nature and the form of the result we obtained. The jet lag, the fascination that the city of Bangkok and its inhabitants exerted on me, the monstrous traffic jams which did not permit all the rehearsals, the context of the Bangkok Fringe Festival where the piece had to be premiered, led us to present to the audience a kind of theatrical report of our experience.

We happened to produce a kind of theatrical and choreographic documentary of our real situation. The piece puts two artists face to face who know nothing about each other, who have very different aesthetical practices and who both try to know more about the other, and above all about their respective artistic practices, despite the abyssal cultural gap dividing them.

Some very problematic notions such as euro-centrism, inter-culturalism or cultural globalization are at stake all along the piece. These notions, so delicate to discuss, can't be left apart.

The historical moment doesn't allow us to skip these stakes over.

Jérôme Bel, Seoul, June 1st 2005

Jérôme Bel

Jérôme Bel was born in 1968. He lives in Paris and works worldwide. He studied at the Centre National de Danse Contemporaine of Angers (France). From 1985 to 1991, he danced for many choreographers in France and Italy. In 1992, he was assistant to the director and choreographer Philippe Découffé for the ceremonies of the XVIIth Winter Olympic Games of Albertville and Savoie (France).

His first piece, a choreography of objects, is entitled *Nom donné par l'auteur* (1994), the second one *Jérôme Bel* (1995) is based on the total nudity of the four performers. The third one, *Shitology* (1997) was a commission by the Centro Cultural de Belem (Lisbon) and Victoria (Ghent, Belgium). It was put on again in 2000 with Japanese performers in Kyoto and Tokyo. It presents actors, each one wearing many tee-shirts printed with widely-known slogans.

Then comes *The last performance* (1998), which quoted several times a solo by the German choreographer Susanne Linke. The piece *Xavier Le Roy* (1999) was signed by Jérôme Bel but entirely done by the French choreographer living in Berlin, Xavier Le Roy.

The show must go on (2001) gathers a cast of twenty performers, nineteen pop songs and one DJ. A version of the piece was in the repertory of the Deutsches Schauspielhaus in Hamburg between 2000 and 2005.

In October 2003, Jérôme Bel was the curator with Alain Platel of the Klapstuk Festival in Leuven (Belgium).

He was invited to produce a piece for the Paris Opera ballet : *Véronique Doisneau* (2004), a theatrical documentary on the work of the "corps de ballet" dancer of that company, Veronique Doisneau. Isabel Torres (2005) for the ballet of the Teatro Municipal of Rio de Janeiro is the Brazilian version of the production for the Paris Opera.

In Dec 2004, enroute to Thailand to create this piece with Pichet Klunchun, he was invited by Ong Keng Sen to participate in TheatreWork's Flying Circus Project. There he presented *The Last Performance* as a lecture and also *The Show Must Go On 2*.

Jérôme Bel received a Bessie Award for the performances of *The show must go on* in New York in 2005.

Pichet Klunchun

Pichet Klunchun is a Thai classical dance artist who attempts to adapt the traditional works of Thai classical dance to a more contemporary style while still keeping the heart of the tradition. The Thai classical arts society claims he is a most innovative artist, who dares to adjust the dance culture in Thailand from the traditional old style to a newer and more modernized style. He trained for Thai Classical Mask Dance, "Khon," from the age of 16 with Chaiyot Khummanee, one of the best Khon Masters in Thailand.

He achieved his undergraduate major in Classical Thai Dance at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok. After graduation, he did a lot of theatre work both as dancer and choreographer at high-profile occasions like the opening and closing ceremonies of Asian Games in Bangkok in 1998. Subsequently he has also worked with contemporary dance.

Lately he has participated in several intercultural performing arts programs as a representative for Thai classical dance artists and as an international choreographer. In 2001 he was awarded a scholarship for a 7-month-performing arts exposure in the United States, sponsored by the Asian Cultural Council. Since 2001, he has performed a number of international productions, including "Search: Hamlet" in 2002 in Denmark, and *The Global Soul* in 2003-2004, both collaborating with Ong Keng Sen, in many European countries.

Recently, he also established his own company called *LifeWork Company* for the purpose of training young dancers with strong Thai classical dance backgrounds. Pichet is the only artist in the country who develops his work from the traditional "Khon" dance, and is also able to collaborate with other artists at the international level.